



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

**Tuesday, January 20, 2009**

**6:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **SPECIAL MEETING**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.*

#### **2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond and Councilor Brown-Tracy

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.*

#### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **2009-0019      FYE 2010 Budget Discussed**

*- Discussion with Public Works Department and Police Department*

*Chief of Police Kelly Fogg explained that 90% of the Police budget is associated with personnel so that any sustainable cuts would have to come out of the personnel area of the budget.*

*A level service budget would maintain the current level of service and programs, and would not include the two new officer positions identified for the last year of the three-year plan to increase staffing to reduce reliance on overtime. Chief Fogg explained that there has been a shift in the workforce. Whereas in the past, overtime was a preferable way to staff, newer officers prefer working their regular hours.*

*Chief Fogg then reviewed the alternative budget scenarios, as follows: (Note that reductions are cumulative.)*

*2% Increase - Under this scenario, salary increases could not be covered. Two officer positions that were scheduled to be filled in January 2009 would not be filled. There would be a reduction in the Community Policing Networking Program, which is currently 3½ days per week in Poquonnock Bridge and 2 days per week in Navy Housing. This program is a proactive, effective, and successful program supported by the citizens. Under this budget scenario, the Navy Housing portion of the program would be eliminated.*

*0% - Under this scenario, salary increases would need to be absorbed in the current year budget. It would require elimination of programs to return officers to patrol and reduce overtime costs. Programs that would be eliminated are the Community Policing Program; the School Resource Officer program at the high school (first line of defense for what happens at the school); the Community Service Officer in downtown Mystic (college student interns interested in law enforcement fulfill a need in downtown Mystic and also acts as a recruiting tool); and Maritime Academy funding (\$4,500 of \$11,000 program cost). An additional patrol officer position would also be eliminated. Chief Fogg noted that it takes years to build up a successful program and*

once a program is eliminated, it is difficult to reintroduce it. Also, the variety of programs offered in the Town of Groton helps recruit officers.

*3% Decrease* - This scenario would result in elimination of the canine program (dogs are trained for protection, searches, tracking, and drug detection). Chief Fogg feels it is an important deterrent seeing a marked canine unit vehicle. The Assistant Animal Control Officer position would be reduced to part time, and a Youth Officer position and a Detective position would be eliminated. This scenario would also result in elimination of the DARE program and the School Resource Officer in the middle/elementary schools.

*5% Decrease* - In addition to the above-noted impacts, this scenario would eliminate two additional patrol officers and eliminate the Drug Task Force so that officers could be returned to patrol to maintain core operations. Chief Fogg noted that as positions are eliminated, there is a corresponding increase in overtime. He further noted that since the early 1970s, there have been six patrol officers on the road during a normal shift. He does not recommend reducing that number in the interest of preserving public and officer safety.

Chief Fogg recognizes these are tough times, but that is when the community needs police services. The services provided are essential, important functions that the citizens have wanted over the years.

Mayor Watson noted that the high school is now employing security guards to enforce school rules, but they do not have arrest powers. Councilor O'Beirne asked if the canine program could be regionalized. Chief Fogg noted that although the program has not formally been structured as a regional program, it operates on a regional basis and towns work cooperatively. Councilor O'Beirne questioned the average attrition of officers over the last three years. Chief Fogg noted that the last five years have seen abnormally high attrition due to retirements. Normally, it is two per year due to retirement. Officers do not usually leave to go to other departments.

In response to Councilor Streeter, Chief Fogg noted that there are two officers assigned to the Drug Task Force at straight time. Their regular duties are backfilled with overtime officers approximately 66% of the time. Also, the Maritime Academy costs do not include personnel time. The cost of the canine program is \$54,000, which includes training, overtime, care, food, and certification fees on a yearly basis. Currently, there are three vacancies in the Police Department.

Councilor O'Beirne asked for a comparison of police costs for Groton Long Point, the City, and the Town. Town Manager Oefinger noted that he has shared preliminary information with the Mayor, but it has not yet been reviewed/refined.

Councilor Sheets clarified the number of vacancies relative to positions proposed for elimination under the various scenarios. She also asked about the potential impact on response times. Chief Fogg noted that there would be some impact, but calls are, and will continue to be, prioritized for response purposes.

Director of Public Works Gary Schneider distributed a one page overview of his discussion points. The Public Works budget is approximately 50% operating costs and 50% personnel. The department budget pays for all utilities for Town buildings (a fixed cost). Mr. Schneider reviewed "candidates for reduction or elimination" under the various budget scenarios as follows:

- Arbitrary reduction in funds to maintain three vacated schools (not including Noank or William Seely)
- Reduction in snow removal services to outside agencies (Mumford Cove, fire/ambulance/health, schools).
- Reduction/elimination of Transfer Station Sunday hours and free weeks.

- *Vehicle reduction.*
- *Equipment reduction (roll off containers at the Transfer Station).*
- *Underutilized facilities (closure of the Community Policing building on Central Avenue).*
- *Materials and supplies (reduction in asphalt which according to the recent Pavement Management Program should be increased not reduced.)*
- *Personnel (arbitrary cuts in overtime.)*
- *Impact on personnel would be reclassification of one position under the 2% and 0% increase scenarios; elimination of two full time positions under the 3% decrease scenario; and elimination of four full time positions under the 5% reduction scenario.*

*Councilor O'Beirne asked if any consideration was given to postponing vehicle replacement to achieve greater budget reductions. The Town Manager noted that he has looked at reductions across the entire fleet which will be reflected in the Fleet Fund and then reflected in the individual departments. Councilor O'Beirne asked about pooling vehicles for co-located departments and the Town Manager noted that already occurs. He assured the Council that the Fleet Fund has been reviewed in great detail, and the fleet has been right-sized as much as possible.*

*There are no part time positions in the Public Works Department. In the past, positions were combined or eliminated. At one time, Public Works had 105 full time equivalent employees; currently there are 77. Mr. Schneider noted that if the asphaltting function is reduced, it would not result in a reduction in the number of employees. Instead, employees would work on a backlog of maintenance items.*

*Councilor Sheets noted that she received a compliment on the condition of the roads during ice and storm events this winter. Mr. Schneider noted the department has been out for 14 events, two more than budgeted for. Currently snow removal costs are approximately \$150,000 over budget, mostly due to material. Councilor O'Beirne asked if the Town could approach the state to reduce the number of required street sweepings now that only salt is being used.*

*No changes are proposed in the sewer use fees. The solid waste account reflects a reduction due to a lower waste stream.*

**2009-0015      Town Clerk Compensation**

**Not Discussed**

**2008-0168      Town Manager Annual Evaluation**

**Not Discussed**

**4.      ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.*